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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MCAP](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: AFGHAN GOVERNMENT PLANNING FOR VICTORY DAY--STRONG
PREPARATION AND SUPPORT, BUT NO DECISION YET

Classified By: Political-Military Counselor Robert Clarke for Reason 1.
4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Afghanistan's security agencies are in the midst of intense planning and rehearsals for the annual April 28 "Victory Day" celebration, which commemorates the day in 1992 on which the Afghan mujahedeen overthrew the Russian-backed regime. However, with the last year's failed assassination attempt against President Karzai and the blame-casting afterwards (which slowed ANSF decision-making for at least three months) in mind--and serious current security threat information mounting--the GIROA has not yet made a final decision on the form of the celebration, or even whether to hold it. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The top leadership of the Presidential Security and Protection Service (PPS), Afghan National Army (ANA), National Police (ANP), and domestic intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) have devised and coordinated a three-tier security cordon plan for Victory Day to seal off the capital city, and to provide tight, close in security belts at the parade site in the center of Kabul, next to the Olympic Stadium. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are conducting celebration rehearsals, including flyovers of aircraft and helicopters every day. The Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) has practically suspended normal mission activities for the last week to equip and support the Afghan preparations. ISAF is prepared to provide "in extremis support" including engineering obstacles, explosive ordinance search dogs, quick reaction forces (QRF) and on call close air support (CAS). ISAF will make available mortar locating radar and ISR (full motion overhead video monitoring), and medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and mass casualty response capabilities for contingencies. CSTC-A will provide ballistic glass for the VIP stand. The Joint Intelligence Operations Center-Afghanistan (JIOC-A) meets daily to pull together inter-agency threat intelligence that it passes to the Afghans.

¶3. (C) The Coalition--particular U.S. officers--is extending tremendous support to the GIROA for this event. However, in the interest of promoting decision-making capacities and maturity in the GIROA, the Coalition has left the final decisions for Victory Day to the Afghans. Five days before the scheduled event, the GIROA is still considering five options: 1) shorten the parade; 2) change the date to April 27 to gain the element of surprise; 3) do the full celebration as rehearsed on April 28; 4) scale down the celebration to fit a new venue, the Presidential Palace; and 5) cancel the public celebration entirely.

¶4. (C) Comment: The Afghan security leadership is engaged in hot debate over the Victory Day plans. Defense Minister Wardak wants to move ahead as planned. Others, however, are hesitant in part because the aftermath of the assassination attempt last year was months of public and internal ANA/ANP finger-pointing and investigations aimed at assigning responsibility for the security failure. Some fear that an incident again this year could result in the same process of recrimination and damage to the ANSF image. The JIOC-A is

sharing threat assessments that show real insurgent efforts to score another propaganda coup with a spectacular attack are being planned. Many in the Afghan leadership realize that the preparations are so thorough that the chances of a successful Taliban attack are low. Nevertheless, some senior Afghans believe that there is a lower risk in simply cancelling, or scaling back the event, which would open them to temporary criticism, than in opening the possibility of appearing incompetent if the Taliban succeeded in disrupting Victory Day again. While many of the lessons learned from last year have been absorbed, the Afghans have not yet accepted the key notion of assuming joint responsibility and sharing the blame in the relatively low likelihood that something happens. End Comment

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